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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, November 17, 1932

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "More about Medicines". Information from the Food and Drug Administration, U. S. D. A.

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Where do you keep your medicine? Now that some kinds of drugs which everybody uses are sold disguised in taste and appearance so that they resemble fruit, candy, or chewing gum, it is especially important that we keep the medicine cabinet out of the reach of small children, and to teach older ones not to touch it. Many medicines, either harmless or beneficial in small doses, will cause death when taken in large amounts. Recently, a healthy 10-year-old boy, living in California, ate the contents of a box of laxative tablets of a well-known type, mistaking them for candy. He became very ill. His mother called a doctor. The boy's temperature rose rapidly; he became delirious and died nine days later.

It is easy for children to mistake sugar coated tablets for candy. "Adults are less likely to make such a mistake", Dr. F.J. Cullen, of the Federal Food and Drug Administration tells us. "The food and drugs act requires that laxatives, prepared in chewing gum or confection form, be labeled to indicate that they are a medicine and not a confection. Manufacturers generally are labeling laxatives and cathartics in full compliance with the law."

Dr. Cullen says further that laxatives have valuable uses but some people form the "laxative habit", and this may prove injurious. The intensity of the effect of cathartics varies from mild to extreme, a little bit of one laxative may bring as extreme results as larger quantities of another. Generally, the effects vary with different individuals. This is why the buyer needs to read the labels on all medicines. This is also why medicines need to be kept out of reach of children. The food and drug act requires that a manufacturer declare the presence of only a limited number of specified drugs, such as alcohol and narcotics, it does insist that, if the label names the constituents, it name them correctly. I might remind you though, that the Food and Drug Administration has no power to compel manufacturers of medicines to advertise them truthfully, nor can it enforce the act requiring truthful labels against any company which does not ship some of its products out of the state in which they are made.

While I am talking about medicine and the Food and Drug Administration, you might be interested to know that not long ago the Government seized a product, recommended as a treatment for diabetes, shipped by a drug concern in Berlin, Germany, to a New York company for sale to Americans. The preparation was of no value to anyone suffering from diabetes. Officials made the seizure under the import provisions of the Federal food and drugs act, which requires that all food and drugs shipped into the United States be unadulterated and truthfully labeled.

Preventing the sale of this worthless remedy probably saved many sick people from spending money which they needed badly.

Dr. Cullen says no drug nor combination of drugs known to medical science can cure diabetes and persons who suffer from this malady ought not to rely for treatment upon almond or bran bread, suprarenal extracts, epinephrine, opium, sodium bicarbonate or levulose, remedies which some people seem to think are helpful. In every country the natives have a favorite herb superstitiously believed to have curative value for this serious disease, diabetes. But no record shows that any of these herbs can cure, although many of them give the false impression of helping by lessening the symptoms. Some manufacturers in this country have recommended for diabetes cure-alls which simply could not have any value as a remedy for the disease.

The only reliable method of combating diabetes is the use of insulin, a discovery of the medical research organization endowed by Samuel H. Insull, the well-known, former financier and utilities magnate. Patients take insulin by hypodermic injection, together with a suitable diet-- even this is not to be considered a cure.

Products which are labeled with claims to cure diabetes are liable to seizure under the food and drug law, and their manufacturers to prosecution.

By the way, while we are on the subject of medicines, let's consider for a minute some safety-first methods of handling them. Never mind if it is a busy day. Take time out to label all bottles in your medicine cabinet clearly so no-body in your household can make a mistake in using them. Use bright red ink on the labels of poison bottles and print the letters large enough so anyone can read them. Many disastrous mistakes in taking medicine have occurred at night. Somebody gets up in the dark and, thinking she knows the familiar medicine bottle well enough, pours out a dose without turning on the light. A friend of mine has invented a simple system by which she can tell bottles of poison in the dark. She sticks two pins through the cork of any poison bottle and she can feel these pins, whether the light is on or not. Since many medicines lose their effectiveness in a short time, when the need for them is over, better throw them out rather than have them clutter up your medicine cabinet.

Tomorrow let's talk over the problem of sweets for children. And I'll give you two short but very good recipes for wholesome sweets for the youngsters.

